

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL AMBITION
OF IOWA STATE REPRESENTATIVES

An abstract of a Thesis by
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My thesis is that the politically ambitious state representative is well-educated, urban and young. An attempt was also made to define other characteristics of ambition.

The 100 state representatives were interviewed. Information on their backgrounds and how they operate as legislators were crosstabulated with answers on whether they are interested in seeking statewide or congressional office. Much of the statistical analysis was done by computer.

The findings supported the thesis. In addition, the findings indicate that single persons and liberals are likely to be more ambitious than married persons and conservatives; that by occupational group farmers appear to be the least ambitious; that ambitious state representatives are more likely than non-ambitious representatives to vote for the statewide interest over the interest of their own legislative districts; that ambitious representatives are more likely to hold a legislative leadership position than are non-ambitious representatives; and other results of a less conclusive nature.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL AMBITION
OF IOWA STATE REPRESENTATIVES

A Thesis
Presented to
The School of Graduate Studies
Drake University

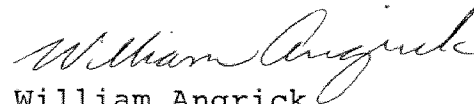
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Master of Arts

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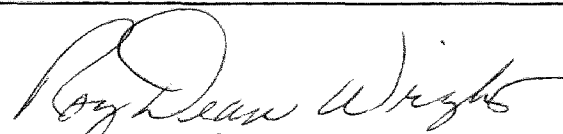
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The rise of the behavioral movement in political science has produced an interesting blend of empirical knowledge and statistical information. In numerous major studies of political behavior,¹ practitioners have strained so-called hard data through sophisticated mathematical controls, while allowing human factors gleaned from observation to frame the results.

One result has been that since achieving respectability only three decades ago, political behavioralism has crowded aside the traditional approach of analyzing the political process by examining its institutions. However, newly found acceptance has produced complacency in some political science behaviorists, which Heinz Eulau warns against. The conflict between behaviorists and traditionalists continues, which is unfortunate because behavioral approaches "are complimentary and supplementary to the more traditional

¹For a summary of writings, which emphasize voting behavior, see William H. Flanigan, Political Behavior of the American Electorate (2d ed.; Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972), pp. 2-5. For a summary of studies of legislators and related areas see James David Barber, The Lawmakers (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 262-263.

methods of the discipline," Eulau has written.¹ Moreover, behavioralism is challenged both from without and within. The movement has grown to be a "threat to traditional values in the minds of some," Eulau explains, and there are behavioralists who contend the movement should be more sharply focused on practical solutions to "the world's personal and social ills."²

The absence of a generally accepted theory of politics or government suggests that behavioralists in those areas have lacked specific direction. At the same time, preconceptions, particularly in a relatively new field, could be an inhibiting factor to unbiased research and the development of properly substantiated theories. An objection to prematurely adopting a rigid position may be behind this criticism from Eulau and James G. March of the traditional approach:³

Although the classics of political philosophy from Plato to John Stuart Mill have been "people systems," modern political science, at least until recently, neglected the human actors that make political institutions and processes tick.

¹Heinz Eulau, Micro-Macro Political Analysis (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), p. 161.

²Ibid., p. 365.

³Conclusions of the "Behavioral and Social Services Survey," ed. by Heinz Eulau and James G. March, Political Science (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 27.

Behavioralism is righting that neglect in political science, they indicate, adding the prediction that there will be renewed interest in studies of political leadership and leadership recruitment. Leadership is in many ways a characteristic of the political system, rather than an independent variable, Eulau and March write, but "before it can be studied as a systemic property its behavioral dimensions must be analyzed more fully."¹

They seem to be in close agreement with Don R. Bowen, who believes political scientists have come to realize the necessity for developing stable and unambiguous classification schemes.² Bowen also points out that a common thread of the behavioral movement has been the goal of constructing a systematic empirical theory of politics.³

A variation of that goal, the need for an ambition theory of politics, has been called for by Joseph Schlesinger,⁴ who has been foremost in charting characteristics of elective office holders. Meanwhile, James David

¹Eulau and March, p. 50.

²Don R. Bowen, Political Behavior of the American Public (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968), p. 15.

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Joseph Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1966), p. 4.

Barber concentrates on theory and methodology in studying political recruitment. Barber uses a line by Magnus in Shaw's play "The Apple Cart" to make his point:

Even political science, the science by which civilization must live or die, is busy explaining the past while we have to grapple with the present; it leaves the ground before our feet in black darkness whilst it lights up every corner of the landscape behind us.¹

It is not the intention of this thesis to belittle the work of such prominent political scientists. Being able to predict the performance of politicians, which is a concern of Barber's, has appeal. But a literature search convinces one that regardless of the quantity which has been written on characteristics of political ambition, much of the landscape behind us remains in shadows, if not in darkness. It is with some wonderment, and frustration, that one considers the lack of reliable data available on a subject so basic. Political scientists appear to have leapfrogged their way from summaries of biographical information on politicians to attempts at framing a theory on ambition--while barely dealing with those issues which lay between. As John W. Soule wrote, "... it is with some amazement that one notes the lack of systematic evidence dealing with such

¹James David Barber, "Strategies for Understanding Politicians," American Journal of Political Science, XVIII (May, 1974), 443-467.

[political] ambitions of incumbent officeholders."¹

Who, then, are the ambitious politicians? Who are the people they represent? What are their current political fortunes? How do they operate when dealing with constituents? And perhaps most important, what are the results when characteristics of political ambition are analyzed. In an effort to find answers--or clues that later might lead to answers--to these and other questions, the 100 Iowa state representatives were interviewed.

My thesis is that the politically ambitious representative is well-educated, young and comes from an urban area. Other possible characteristics of ambition will be defined, or at least discussed. They include family background, willingness to remain in the Legislature and serve in leadership roles, and whether the ambitious legislator is oriented toward statewide interests or those of his district. The definition of ambition in this thesis is having an interest in holding higher elective office; that is, a statewide or congressional seat.

That definition is more restrictive than generally used by political scientists who have conducted similar

¹John W. Soule, "Future Political Ambitions and the Behavior of Incumbent State Legislators," Midwest Journal of Political Science, XIII (August, 1969), 439-454.

studies.¹ Those studies have employed Schlesinger's definition of progressive ambition, which is aspiring "to attain an office more important than the one he [a politician] now seeks or is holding." Schlesinger contrasts that form of ambition with discrete ambition, where a politician "wants the office for its specified term and then chooses to withdraw from public office," and static ambition, where a person "seeks to make a long-run career out of a particular office."²

The shortcoming in Schlesinger's definition of progressive ambition is that it is too broadly drawn. A legislator, upon being interviewed, may say he or she someday hopes to attain a more important office. What is a more important office? For the freshman legislator who discovers little satisfaction in legislating, being elected to the county board of supervisors may become more important. Or, a dissolutioned lawmaker may attach more importance to becoming an elected administrator, such as county clerk of court. Those legislators then would probably fall within Schlesinger's definition of having discrete or static ambition. But what effect did their earlier interview responses

¹See Soule, op. cit., p. 441; Paul L. Hain, "Age, Ambitions, and Political Careers: The Middle-age Crisis," The Western Political Quarterly, XXVII (June, 1974), p. 266.

²Schlesinger, p. 10.

have on political science's limited pool of ambition data? With a more tightly drawn definition of political ambition, could it not have been determined at the outset that their ambition was static, not progressive? For example, in interviewing representatives for this thesis, some--both freshmen and veterans--initially said they did aspire to higher office. "I'd like to run for the Senate some day" was a common response. The Senate referred to was Iowa's and when it was explained that only statewide and congressional offices were considered higher, those representatives changed their answers to no. Those lawmakers would have come under Schlesinger's definition of progressive ambition. In fact, they are not seeking to be full-time, career politicians. If developing an ambition theory of politics is important, it is the career politician--or at least those who strive to someday fall in that class--who should be studied.

The intention here is not to downplay the importance of local or legislative office. Decisions made by those public officials often are more important to their constituents than actions taken by Congress or officials elected statewide. Indeed, in large metropolitan areas, being mayor or on the city council may be a more prestigious and powerful position than being, for example, a congressman or the state auditor. When that is the case, it should be recognized by those studying political ambition. That is not the case in

Iowa. Being elected mayor of Des Moines or to the Iowa General Assembly does not, one would submit, meet either the general public's or most politicians' definition of having achieved high public office.

A further question arises that bears directly on the subjects interviewed for this paper: Is the ambition level of legislators important in Iowa? Put another way, what route do politicians follow in obtaining high elective office in this state? In what appears to be the most inclusive work on the backgrounds of major political leaders--governors and U.S. senators--Schlesinger says Iowa and Rhode Island are the most "highly structured" states in the way political leaders are selected, and that the "principle pattern" for advancement is through the Legislature. His study covered the years 1900 to 1958 for governors and 1914 to 1958 for U.S. Senators.¹

An examination of Iowa records between 1960 and 1974² indicates the Legislature continues to be an important training ground and stepping stone for ambitious politicians. Of three new governors elected in those years, none had been a legislator and of four new U.S. senators, only one

¹Schlesinger, p. 109.

²Based primarily on biographies of congressmen and officials elected statewide as found in the Iowa Official Register (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1959-60 through 1973-74).

had been a lawmaker. But the check also showed that of 18 new holders of other statewide offices--lieutenant governor, secretary of state, auditor, secretary of agriculture, treasurer and attorney general--eight had been legislators. Of 13 new U.S. Representatives elected from Iowa between 1960 and 1974, four had been legislators. Perhaps as important as the figures is the fact that when alternative avenues of political advancement to other statewide offices are tabulated, only local elective office is in the background of more persons (six) elected to the U.S. House than is legislative experience. No other category--private business, public administration, or local elective office--seriously challenged legislative background as a means of advancing to statewide office.

An interesting study of 474 legislators from California, New Jersey, Ohio and Tennessee¹ was later classified in terms of political ambition and office advancement for the 1957-70 period by Paul Hain. His analysis showed that 74 percent of those lawmakers who achieved higher office had earlier expressed progressive ambitions. Looked at another way, 42 percent of those who said they were ambitious in 1957 later achieved higher office, while

¹William Buchanan, Heinz Eulau, LeRoy C. Ferguson, and John Wahlke, The Legislative System: Explorations in Legislative Behavior (New York: Wiley Publishing Co., 1962).

only 21 percent of those who said they were not ambitious went on to higher office. Hain concluded that planning ahead is necessary for political advancement by younger legislators, while advancement by those 55 and older involves a greater degree of chance.¹ Thus, one might argue, how legislators perceive their ambitions may be a fairly good predictor of how successful many of them ultimately will be.

The importance of better understanding politicians seems obvious. Schlesinger, in a widely quoted observation on political ambition, had this to say:

To slight the role of ambition in politics, then, or to treat it as a human failing to be suppressed, is to miss the central function of ambition in political systems. A political system unable to kindle ambitions for office is as much in danger of breaking down as one unable to restrain ambitions. Representative government, above all, depends on a supply of men so driven; the desire for election and, more important, for re-election becomes the electorate's restraint upon its public officials. No more irresponsible government is imaginable than one of highminded men unconcerned for their political futures.²

At the same time, ambition and what a politician will do to fulfill it is a matter worthy of public inspection. That process may be improved by better understanding from whence our politicians come.

¹Hain, p. 272.

²Schlesinger, p. 2.

Chapter 2

THE LITERATURE

Probably the best researched characteristic of political ambition is age. As one might expect, studies have shown that level of ambition decreases with years. Writes Schlesinger:

The hopes which lie in the hearts of young men running for their first offices are secret. Some are undoubtedly already forming their first presidential inaugural address, while others have no thought of the future. But, as a career develops, success spurs ambition and failure dampens it. What is reasonable for a 30-year-old state legislator is ridiculous in his colleague of 60.¹

Schlesinger then makes these generalizations: The younger a person is when entering politics the greater the range of ambition and the likelihood of developing as a career politician; success among young candidates produces firm commitments to a political career.² His research shows that of U.S. representatives elected in 1956, when divided into five-year age groups, the largest bloc first entered the House between the ages of 35 and 40. Schlesinger's study also showed that of governors first elected between

¹Joseph Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1966), p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 176.

1900 and 1958, the greatest number were between 45 and 50 years old, and of U.S. senators elected for the first time between 1914 and 1958, the largest number were between ages 50 and 55.¹

Those points become more salient when one considers the growing number of young people eligible to participate in politics, and the emphasis society in recent years has placed on their involvement. Early office seeking appears particularly important in Iowa when it is noted that 53 percent of the governors and senators in Schlesinger's study were first elected to a public office before reaching age 30. Only four states--South and North Carolina, Mississippi and Florida--had a higher percentage.²

Hain's analysis of legislators from four states found that 81 percent of the lawmakers 30 and younger had progressive ambitions, compared with only 12 percent of those 66 or older. Progressive ambition was defined as wanting to move to more important political office. The study also showed that the ambition level ranked no lower than 75 percent for legislators through age 45 and then dropped off markedly. Hain, who as noted earlier also studied candidate success rates at different ages, concluded: "The realistic outlook

¹Schlesinger, p. 175.

²Ibid., p. 190.

for a state legislator older than 50 is that he will not advance."¹

He also argues that of the many factors affecting political ambition, "age is central."² With increasingly complex issues facing lawmakers, however, it is possible to build a case that education is, at least, close behind. After comparing educational experience with income and occupation, Stephen E. Bennett and William R. Klecka asserted that education has the most effect on attitudes which "are said to motivate people to participate in political life..."³

More specifically, Soule's study of the Michigan House showed that 77 percent of the legislators with college degrees aspired to more important political office, while 47 percent with some college or business school and only 33 percent of those with a high school education or less had such aspirations. "Legislators who have less than a college degree may be reflecting realistic attitudes about their own political goals rather than a disregard for higher office

¹Paul L. Hain, "Age, Ambitions, and Political Careers: The Middle-age Crisis," The Western Political Quarterly, XXVII (June, 1974), 273-274.

²Ibid., p. 269.

³Stephen E. Bennett and William R. Klecka, "Social Status and Political Participation: A Multivariate Analysis of Predictive Power," Midwest Journal of Political Science, XIV (August, 1970), 355-382.

per se," wrote Soule.¹

Another interesting aspect is the effect rural or urban orientation has on ambition. The data, however, is not conclusive, and neither is it strictly comparable to the research done for this thesis. One study on party competition in Iowa found that county chairmen from urban counties tend to have more education, higher incomes, are younger and more mobile. The study did not find, however, that there is more party competition in urban counties. The degree of party competition was based on election returns for the 1955-65 period, using races for governor, attorney general and state representatives.² Another Iowa study concluded after analyzing election returns between 1946-56 in contests for governor, state representatives and selected county officials, that the degree of party competition does not increase in urban areas.³ It should be noted, however, that the relationship between party competition and individual ambition is not necessarily consistent.

¹John W. Soule, "Future Political Ambitions and the Behavior of Incumbent State Legislators," Midwest Journal of Political Science, XIII (August, 1969), 447.

²Richard J. Heuwinkel and Charles W. Wiggins, "Party Competition and Party Leadership Attributes," American Journal of Political Science, XVII (February, 1973), 159-169.

³Samuel C. Patterson and G. R. Boynton, "Legislative Recruitment in a Civic Culture," Social Science Quarterly, September, 1969, pp. 243-263.

Yet another study, which surveyed city council members in several municipalities, found that 55 percent of those officials from cities of 30,000 or more population desired other political office, while only 33 percent of those officials from smaller cities expressed such an interest.¹

It would be stretching to compare traditionally lower voter turnout in rural areas with individual ambition. However, a statement on voter turnout by Robert E. Lane will be offered because it also makes interesting observations on the differences between urban and rural politics:

Sense of citizen duty increases with the population of the voting area, evidently reflecting a higher rate of assimilation of civic norms by lower-status people in such areas. It also is true that sense of political efficacy is higher in metropolitan areas than in other areas... Residents of cities... belong to more organizations than do rural residents, increasing their contact with like-minded people and making politics more salient for them. Contact with the media is, to some extent at least, greater in urban than in rural areas... Levels of education, and therefore of understanding of the issues and visibility of personal and group stakes in electoral decisions, are higher in urban communities...²

This data suggests that urban areas--regardless of the degree of party competition--offer an atmosphere that is more

¹Gordon S. Black, "A Theory of Political Ambitions: Career Choices and the Role of Structural Incentives," The American Political Science Review, LXVI (March, 1972), 157.

²Robert E. Lane, Political Life: Why People Get Involved in Politics (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), p. 266.

likely to prepare individuals for seeking public office. Once realizing some success by being elected to office, it is further anticipated, the urban climate is more apt to propel individuals toward higher office.

It might follow, therefore, that once elected, the most ambitious officeholders would view their responsibilities--and political opportunities--from a broad perspective. At least two studies have indicated this to be true. In a survey of 372 city councilmen, Kenneth Prewitt and William Nowlin found that ambitious officeholders tend to have a broad rather than narrow perspective on policy questions.¹ And Soule's study found that 35 percent of ambitious Michigan legislators were state oriented, 41 percent were district-state oriented, and 24 percent were district oriented. On the other hand, 29 percent of non-ambitious lawmakers were reported to be state oriented, 32 percent were district-state oriented, and 39 percent were district oriented. "We would expect politically ambitious legislators to broaden their role taking (i.e., state oriented), because higher office would involve an expanded constituency," Soule explained.²

¹Kenneth Prewitt and William Nowlin, "Political Ambitions and the Behavior of Incumbent Politicians," Western Political Quarterly, XXII (June, 1969), 298-308.

²Soule, pp. 452-453.

The influence of the family has been widely recognized as a factor in an individual's future interest in politics. One study of legislators from four states found that between 41 percent and 59 percent of the lawmakers, depending on which state they were from, had one or more relatives who were or had been involved in politics.¹ Other studies have shown that a person's sense of political efficacy is greater if he or she comes from a politically stimulated home,² and that leaders of the Eighty-eighth Congress reported having been socialized at an earlier age than members of the four legislatures referred to above.³

Other information, however, tempers any hasty conclusions that one may be inclined to make about the family's influence on political ambition. Soule, for example, asked 94 legislators what the main agent of their political socialization was. Twenty-four said family, 27 said school,

¹Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan, LeRoy C. Ferguson, and John C. Wahlke, "9. The Political Socialization of American State Legislators," Legislative Behavior: A Reader in Theory and Research, eds. John C. Wahlke and Heinz Eulau (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 306-307.

²Kenneth P. Langton and David A. Karns, "The Relative Influence of the Family, Peer Group, and School in the Development of Political Efficacy," Western Political Quarterly, XXII (December, 1969), 813-826.

³Allan Kornberg and Norman Thomas, "The Political Socialization of National Legislative Elites in the United States and Canada," Journal of Politics, XXVII (November, 1965), 761-775.

21 an event and 22 listed occupational group.¹ Another study reported that of 118 active urban party members interviewed, 43 said their parents were politically active, 71 said their parents had not been, and in four cases the question did not apply.²

Dealing with another question, Soule's study makes a further interesting point. He found that 76 percent of the ambitious legislators interviewed were willing or probably willing to remain in the Michigan House for three terms, while 90 percent of those who did not profess to be ambitious answered in the affirmative.³ Soule drew no conclusions from those percentages, but they suggest that ambitious politicians tend toward chancing electoral defeat in order to achieve their goals and are more prone to place a limit on the commitment they will make to their present office.

Those are the major points, which appear applicable to this thesis, uncovered by the literature search. In summary, the literature shows that ambition wanes with age and increases with level of education, and suggests that having an urban orientation bolsters ambition. The

¹Soule, p. 445.

²Robert H. Salisbury, "The Urban Party Organization Member," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXIX (Winter, 1965-66), 550-564.

³Soule, p. 442.

literature also provides evidence that ambitious politicians approach decision making from a broader perspective; that the level of family political involvement is important--though not paramount--in an individual pursuing a political career; and raises the possibility that politicians who desire higher office are less likely to remain on a lower rung of the political scale if opportunity for advancement does not present itself. Other studies and observations by political scientists were collected. Generally, this information is of lesser importance, in terms of the stated thesis, but will be presented in conjunction with the findings.

Chapter 3

THE INTERVIEWS AND NUMERICAL RESULTS

The 100 state representatives were interviewed between April 17 and September 20, 1975--73 of them in person and the rest by telephone. In almost all cases, legislators were cooperative, and no difference could be discerned in the degree of candor between those lawmakers interviewed by telephone and those interviewed in person. Most interviews took between 10 and 15 minutes each.

It was decided to survey members of the Iowa House, rather than the 50-member Senate, for two reasons. One, it was believed the larger House would provide a broader sampling. Secondly, members of the Senate are older, having an average age of 59,¹ and presumably are more settled in their political careers. It should be pointed out, however, that the Senate, which has four-year terms while state representatives are elected for two years, often does produce candidates for higher office. This appears to be particularly true in "safe" election years when a senator would retain his legislative seat if the move for higher office failed. It would be interesting to survey both state senators and

¹The Des Moines Sunday Register, January 12, 1975, p. 4C, col. 2.

representatives so information on political ambition for the entire Legislature could be obtained and comparisons made between the two chambers.

In preparing the questionnaire (see Appendix I) it was decided to close off questions, thus making the interviews as objective as possible; also, limiting possible responses required representatives to answer some questions more directly than they otherwise might have. Finally, relying on closed off answers, rather than more general ones requiring later interpretation, permitted optimum use of a computer for data analysis.

Some questions asked the lawmakers deserve explanation or comment. Dual occupations were given by some representatives, the most frequent being business and farming. In those cases, the primary occupation was determined, in order to obtain results which are as simple as possible. Representatives' appraisals were accepted without challenge on such questions as the type and political makeup of districts, whether they survey constituent attitudes extensively enough to justify a positive answer, and whether they hold regular, organized meetings with constituents. Two or three representatives who said they did not write a regular newsletter added that they do appear regularly on radio shows, answering questions about legislation and their positions. In determining annual salary, legislators were asked to include the spouses salary, but not their legislative salary. One

legislator refused to include spouses salary, saying it was not pertinent. Two other representatives declined to answer the question, saying income is a personal matter. The basic salary for Iowa lawmakers is \$8,000 a year, plus \$40 a day for attending committee meetings and other official functions when the General Assembly is not in session. Thus, gross income would often be one or two brackets higher than indicated in the results. Legislative pay was not included in an attempt to determine the financial base a representative has when considering a campaign for higher office. However, some legislators say they could make more money if they were not in the General Assembly. It is conceded that a case could be made for having included legislative salary as part of income.

While of a more speculative nature, an observation also will be made on the political philosophy question. One intention was to require representatives to indicate basic liberal or conservative leanings, and the question appears to have been successful in doing that. But in many cases, representatives appeared to be in a dilemma over whether to classify themselves as liberals or moderate liberals, or as conservatives or moderate conservatives. At least one lawmaker settled on moderately conservative because, he said, conservative has a reactionary connotation with some persons. The same comment in reverse was heard from some lawmakers who suggested that liberal might be interpreted as being radical.

One speculates that had radical and reactionary also been offered as alternatives, those dilemmas might have been eased and the results may have been slightly different, with more representatives declaring themselves to be straight liberal or conservative. One representative also said radical would have been the first choice in a self-definition of political philosophy.

With the advantage of hindsight, other criticisms of the questionnaire can be made. Perhaps ways could have been found to have eliminated no response answers to some questions, although this does not appear to have been a major problem. Also, the questionnaire is not long enough to probe the makeup of ambition as thoroughly as one might prefer. Questionnaire length was restricted because of the number of interviews. As with most studies, however, this one is not considered conclusive, but hopefully is a contribution to political science's bank of information. Other comments on the questionnaire will be made later.

The key question, of course, was: Are you interested in seeking higher elective office? Nine state representatives answered "yes", 30 responded "maybe", and 61 said "no". Those answers and how they relate to other responses will be discussed in the findings after numerical results (see Table I) and legislators comments on seeking higher office are presented.

TABLE I

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES MADE BY THE 100 IOWA STATE
REPRESENTATIVES TO POLITICAL AMBITION
QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex of representatives:	
Male.....	90
Female.....	10
Political party:*	
Republican.....	40
Democratic.....	60
Age of representatives:**	
20 to 29.....	15
30 to 39.....	21
40 to 49.....	31
50 and older.....	33
Occupation:***	
Farmer.....	28
Business.....	24
Lawyer.....	8
Legislator.....	7
Educator.....	7
Laborer.....	7
Retired.....	10
Other.....	9
Marital status:	
Married.....	83
Single.....	17
Educational background:	
High school or less.....	16
Some college or trade school.....	31
Bachelor's degree.....	29
Advance degree.....	24

*As a result of a contested election, a Republican interviewed for this thesis was replaced by a Democrat. There now are 61 Democrats and 39 Republicans in the Iowa House.

**Representatives' average age: 44.

***The other category includes the occupations of community organizer, two students, three housewives, a journalist, a labor relations specialist and a pharmacist.

TABLE I (continued)

Experience in Legislature:	
One year.....	28
Three years.....	44
Four years.....	1
Five years.....	10
Seven years.....	6
Nine or more years.....	11
Type of legislative district:	
Rural.....	31
Mixed.....	36
Urban.....	33
Political makeup of legislative district:	
Strong Republican.....	16
Moderate Republican.....	34
Swing.....	26
Moderate Democratic.....	10
Strong Democratic.....	14
Describe your legislative experience:	
Very rewarding.....	61
Somewhat rewarding.....	34
Somewhat disappointing.....	5
Very disappointing.....	0
Have you been a legislative leader or committee chairman?	
Yes.....	35
No.....	65
Would you seek a leadership post or committee chairmanship in the future?	
Yes.....	70
Maybe.....	9
No.....	21
Would you seek appointment to an interim committee in the future?	
Yes.....	89
No.....	11

TABLE I (continued)

In what order of importance in the development and passage of legislation do you rank individual research, committee work, floor debate and contact with constituents?

Individual research:	
Ranked first.....	24
Ranked second.....	26
Ranked third.....	37
Ranked fourth.....	12
No response.....	1

Committee work:	
Ranked first.....	32
Ranked second.....	34
Ranked third.....	31
Ranked fourth.....	2
No response.....	1

Floor debate:	
Ranked first.....	0
Ranked second.....	8
Ranked third.....	11
Ranked fourth.....	80
No response.....	1

Contact with constituents:	
Ranked first.....	43
Ranked second.....	31
Ranked third.....	20
Ranked fourth.....	5
No response.....	1

If a bill presents a conflict between voting for the state-wide interest or the interest of the people in your district, how would you most likely vote?

Statewide.....	45
District.....	52
No response.....	3

Do you survey constituent attitudes on legislative proposals?

Yes.....	68
No.....	32

TABLE I (continued)

Do you write a regular newsletter?	
Yes.....	75
No.....	25
Do you hold regular, organized meetings with constituents?	
Yes.....	59
No.....	41
Do you accept speaking invitations outside your district?	
Yes.....	86
No.....	14
Do you want to remain in the Legislature?	
Yes.....	65
Maybe.....	32
No.....	3
Did you seek elective or political party positions before running for the Legislature?	
Yes.....	64
No.....	36
Are you interested in seeking party positions in the future?	
Yes.....	20
Maybe.....	4
No.....	76
Politically, how active was your family?	
Very active.....	14
Moderately active.....	35
Inactive.....	51
What is your political philosophy?	
Liberal.....	11
Moderately liberal.....	39
Moderately conservative.....	43
Conservative.....	5
No response.....	2
Do you want to remain active as an elected office holder?	
Yes.....	81
Maybe.....	18
No.....	1

TABLE I (continued)

Are you interested in seeking higher elective office?	
Yes.....	9
Maybe.....	30
No.....	61
If yes or maybe, what higher office is most attractive?	
Governor.....	9
Statewide other than governor.....	12
U.S. senator.....	2
U.S. representative.....	14
No response.....	2
Why are you interested in seeking higher office?*	
Political ambition.....	18
More influence on governmental decisions.....	16
Other.....	5
Why are you not interested in seeking higher office?**	
Satisfied with present position.....	17
Demands on job, finances, family too great.....	13
Too old.....	16
For age, experience, already working to ability..	8
Other.....	7
Annual income:	
Less than \$10,000.....	28
\$10,000 to \$15,000.....	28
\$15,000 to \$20,000.....	18
\$20,000 to \$30,000.....	16
\$30,000 to \$50,000.....	7
\$50,000 and over.....	1
No response.....	2

*Other reasons for being interested in seeking higher office: main interests are national and international affairs, needs a full-time job to afford staying in politics, wants to restore confidence in government, needs a full-time job to remain in politics and is mainly interested in international affairs, general interest in government.

**Other reasons given for not being interested in seeking higher office: have to compromise beliefs too much, physical limitation, is not a realistic ambition, difficult to raise campaign funds, and lack of ambition in three cases.

Having presented that data, a look at some of the explanations representatives gave for why they are or are not interested in seeking higher political office should help flavor the statistical results. Upon reading the comments on why some representatives are interested in higher office, the writer could not determine whether the comments came from a "yes" or "maybe" respondent. For that reason, and because of the small number of "yes" answers, those comments will be treated--for this purpose--as having come from ambitious politicians. First, here are explanations from those who gave political ambition as their reason for aspiring to higher office:

"I'm an ambitious person. It becomes boring after awhile in the same office. I think I could do a good job."

"I think I'd do a good job. I really want to see a woman be there."

"I enjoy the work and as every other American, I would like to progress. If I were foreman of a dirt team, I'd want to be the supervisor--the Great American Dream."

"You have some expertise and knowledge and you want to use that."

"In this business you either go up or get out."

"More power to insert your own ego."

Comments from ambitious representatives who said they want to have more influence on government included:

"You can get a better shot at doing things. You're involved in decision making on a broader basis."

"You think you can do things (at a higher level)

and affect legislation. Here what troubles people most is that you can't do anything about what's happening with the federal government."

"I enjoy working with people and for people. I'm very interested in improving government."

"I'm not terribly interested, but there's always the thought if you could get one rung higher you could do so much more."

"A governor can do more in a week than a legislator can do in a year."

Several ambitious legislators also found it difficult to decide which higher office would be most attractive to them. "For someone to say, 'Bang! That's an office I'm after' is a serious mistake," said one. Explained another: "You don't know what's coming up tomorrow."

Turning to those who say they are not interested in seeking higher office, here are comments from some of those who gave age as the reason:

"I'm too damn old."

"I think it's too late in life. If it was 20 years sooner, I might."

"I've more or less decided to take things easier."

"I don't want to be tied down."

"I'm probably getting to the age where a person should break away from it (politics)."

"I just don't have the incentive, physical stamina that is required to campaign for higher office."

Legislators who said they are satisfied with their present position counted on opportunity for close contact

with constituents as an advantage which could be lost if elected to higher office. Some of the comments:

"The Legislature is the most important (elective office) to the people."

"I'm really happy in the Legislature. That's the process which has always fascinated me."

"I enjoy being a representative, but...that is as far as I want to go."

"If you can do the job at this level, you can have a lot of input into what happens to people."

"I'm not that far into nor do I want to dedicate my life to politics. I'm an educator who happens to be in the Legislature."

"I don't think you would have the same rapport with the people you are trying to aid."

Family, business and a preferred life style would have to be sacrificed too much in the view of some representatives who say they have no interest in seeking statewide or congressional offices. Comments:

"You deprive you and your family from doing some of the things you otherwise would have done."

"I still want to be an active farmer and member of the community."

"I'm neither celibant nor promiscuous so I won't leave my husband."

"I enjoy my occupation. Any higher elective office would totally wipe that out."

"My business comes first."

Other non-ambitious representatives believe they already are working to capacity, in view of their youth, ability or experience. As their comments will indicate,

some of them do not rule out the possibility of being ambitious in the future, but answered "no" when asked if they are interested in seeking higher elective office. Among the responses:

"I don't fancy myself doing more than getting ahold of this job."

"I'm too young for anything higher than I've got. I think I've reached my ability for now."

"I want more experience here."

"Most people with any political smarts don't strike for offices they don't have a realistic chance of getting. I think I've gone about as far as I can go."

"I feel like I'm possibly not educated enough to seek higher office..."

Finally, there are legislators who have other reasons for not seeking higher office, ranging from simple lack of ambition to a physical limitation to finding more satisfaction in non-political work. "To win, they own your soul, whoever put up the money," declared one representative, who is disenchanted with the cost of major campaigns and the problems of financing them. Another lawmaker, long involved in politics, said: "I think I've done more than my share."

As we have seen, representatives have a wide variety of reasons for being or not being interested in higher office. Some reveal frustration with what they are doing; others, satisfaction. Some reasons are personal. Others, practical. Some say they want to benefit others. And there are those who want to fulfill themselves. How, when

statistically analyzed, these explanations translate to characteristics of ambition is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

THE FINDINGS

In analyzing the data, responses to the question on interest in seeking higher elective office were cross-tabulated with answers to all other queries. Results of some crosstabulations appear significant, while others do not. Where crosstabulation has shown a high degree of significance, response breakdowns will be presented in detail, complete with tables. Where results are not significant, at least from the standpoint of crosstabulation statistics, percentage breakdowns between those who are, may be, or are not ambitious usually will be presented. In other cases, where the sampling is too small to be statistically meaningful or where a pattern of ambition does not emerge, general discussion of the data may suffice.

Because only nine lawmakers answered "yes" to having an interest in seeking higher office, there will be times when that group is combined with the 30 who responded "maybe". Those answering "maybe" are considered basically ambitious, because legislators frequently explained that their qualified answer resulted from an understanding of the roles chance and opportunity play in politics (see quoted responses in previous chapter). Running for higher office might depend, for

example, on an incumbent congressman who is a member of the legislator's political party deciding not to seek re-election. Also, little difference was noted by the interviewer in explanations given by "yes" and "maybe" respondents to the prospect of seeking higher office. Put more succinctly, both groups appear interested; "yes" respondents are more interested. It should then follow that comparing "yes" and "maybe" respondents--the ambitious representatives--with those who answered "no" can be a valuable strategy in studying their characteristics.

How does the ambition level among Iowa House members compare with legislators from other states? Iowa's 39 percent (combining those who answered "yes" or "maybe") is well below the 59 percent cited by Hain¹ and the 60 percent cited by Soule.² However, both those studies were on progressive ambition, which was defined as being interested in more important political office.³ When this factor is considered, and it is remembered that Iowa lawmakers were asked only about their interest in seeking statewide or congressional

¹Paul L. Hain, "Age, Ambitions, and Political Careers: The Middle-age Crisis," The Western Political Quarterly, XXVII (June, 1974), 270.

²John W. Soule, "Future Political Ambitions and the Behavior of Incumbent State Legislators," Midwest Journal of Political Science, XIII (August, 1969), 442.

³Hain, p. 266; Soule, p. 441.

office, the ambition level of Iowa representatives may not be substantially lower.

What follows is a question-by-question analysis of interview responses, broken down in terms of ambition.

Sex--Three of the 10 women (30 percent) and 36 of the 90 men (40 percent) said they are or may be interested in seeking higher office. Because of the small number of women, further analysis does not seem appropriate. One might note, however, that women, who make up 51.4 percent¹ of the state's population, are seriously under-represented. Some writers contend that this situation is changing, not only here but nationally. Kristi Andersen, for example, points to the growing momentum of the women's liberation movement, and the changing makeup of the work force--from 34 percent of women being employed full-time in 1952 to 43 percent in 1972. "Over time, this fact must blur the traditional, sharply differentiated sex roles, in politics as in other areas....," she recently wrote.²

Political party--A minority from both major political parties expressed an interest in running for higher office.

¹Iowa Office for Planning and Programming, The Quality of Life in Iowa: An Economic and Social Report to the Governor for 1974, ed. Ronald Sagraves (Des Moines: State of Iowa), pp. 1-6.

²Kristi Andersen, "Working Women and Political Participation," American Journal of Political Science, XIX (August, 1975), 439-453.

Combining "yes" and "maybe" responses, 25 of 60 Democrats--41.6 percent--said they were interested, compared with 14 of 40--or 35 percent--of Republicans. While that percentage difference is not great, Democrats accounted for nearly all--eight of nine or 88.9 percent--of the "yes" responses. Of the 30 answering "maybe," 17 or 56.7 percent were Democrats, and the remainder were Republicans.

Age--The crosstabulation of age with interest in seeking higher office supported previous studies showing that ambition decreases among older legislators (Table II). It is particularly interesting to note that of the nine representatives who answered an unqualified "yes," eight were under 40 years of age. Among those who said "maybe," more middle-aged lawmakers held to the possibility of running for a major office: eight of 31 or 25.8 percent in the 40-49 age bracket. At the same time, only one of 15 representatives 29 years of age or younger is not interested in seeking higher office. That's 6.7 percent, compared with 28.6 percent of those in the 30-39 age group who are not interested, 71 percent of those 40 to 49, and 97 percent of those 50 and older. In no case did an older group give a more positive response to seeking higher office. The median age of ambitious representatives was 33; of non-ambitious House members, 50.

TABLE II
INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER ELECTIVE OFFICE (HEO) BY AGE

Age by Bracket	Yes	Maybe	HEO No	Totals
20-29	4* 26.7 44.4	10 66.7 33.3	1 6.7 1.6	15
30-39	4 19.0 44.4	11 52.4 36.7	6 28.6 9.8	21
40-49	1 3.2 11.1	8 25.8 26.7	22 71.0 36.1	31
50 and older	0	1 3.0 3.3	32 97.0 52.5	33
Totals	9	30	61	100
*Key: Number Row percent Column percent				

Occupation--Historically, farmers have dominated the Iowa House more than any other occupational group. At one time, between 1925 and 1935, farmers held an average of 55.7 percent of the seats and were able to outvote all other groups during five of six legislative sessions covered by Charles Hyneman's study, as discussed by Wahlke and Eulau.¹

¹John C. Wahlke and Heinz Eulau, eds., Legislative Behavior: A Reader in Theory and Research (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 254-256.

With increasing urbanization, the number of farmer-legislators has dwindled to 28, but still leads all other groups. While agriculture remains a potent force in the Iowa Legislature, are farmers a likely group from which to recruit candidates for higher office? This study suggests not. Crosstabulation is of little help when analyzing ambition by jobs, but simple statistics have a story to tell.

While farmers make up 28 percent of the Iowa House, only one of nine--11.1 percent--of the representatives who said they are interested in seeking higher office is a farmer. And only four--or 13.3 percent--of those lawmakers who said they may be interested are farmers. Persons in business, on the other hand, scored slightly above average in terms of ambition. Making up 24 percent of the Iowa House, they account for a third of those who expressed a definite interest in seeking higher office and 26.7 percent of those who answered "maybe" to the question. Because of the small number of representatives in the remaining categories, it would be easy to read too much into that data. Therefore, more meaningful results can be obtained by combining "yes" and "maybe" answers by occupation (Table III). Collapsing that data indicates lawyers and those who consider themselves full-time legislators are the most ambitious. Not unexpectedly, given the crosstabulation on age and ambition, those who are retired expressed no interest in seeking statewide or congressional office.

TABLE III
INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER OFFICE BY OCCUPATION

Occupation	Number in Iowa House	Number answering yes or maybe	Percentage
Farming	28	5	17.9
Business	24	11	45.8
Lawyer	8	6	75.0
Legislator	7	6	85.7
Educator	7	3	42.9
Laborer	7	3	42.9
Other	9	5	55.6
Retired	10	0	0.0
Total	100	39	39.0

The likelihood of persons from various occupations being elected to high public office also may be indicated through an examination of which groups are overrepresented or underrepresented in the House. The obvious problem with this form of analysis is that ambition to serve in the Legislature does not automatically transfer to seeking higher office. A case in point is that of farmers now serving in the House. Also, it is difficult to categorize occupations with complete accuracy. Nevertheless, farmers make up 28 percent of the Iowa House, but only 14.6 percent of the state's labor force; professionals, including lawyers,

educators and some of those in the other occupational category, account for 22 House seats, but only 10.2 percent of the labor force; 24 percent of the representatives are in business, but only 11 percent of the work force is considered managerial; 7 percent of the representatives are laborers, while 60.4 percent of the work force is considered laborers, craftsmen, clerical, transportation or service employees, or hold similar jobs.¹ The conclusion is that professionals, farmers and persons in business are over-represented, while other occupational groups are underrepresented. Numerous studies on the composition of legislatures, both in Iowa and other states, have found the same to be true.²

Marital status--The data shows that three of 17 single representatives--or 17.6 percent--answered "yes" to having an interest in seeking higher elective office and 10 of 17--58.8 percent--answered "maybe", for a total of 76.4 percent positive responses. Six of the 83 married

¹Iowa Office for Planning and Programming, The Quality of Life in Iowa: An Economic and Social Report to the Governor for 1972, ed. Ronald Sagraves (Des Moines: State of Iowa), pp. 2-10.

²Studies include Samuel C. Patterson and G. R. Boynton, "Legislative Recruitment in a Civic Culture," Social Science Quarterly, September, 1969, p. 246; Thomas R. Dye, Politics in States and Communities (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 119; Joseph Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1966), pp. 177-180.

representatives--7.2 percent--answered "yes" and 20 or 24.1 percent responded "maybe," for a total of 31.3 percent. Looked at another way, single persons, while making up only 17 percent of the Iowa House, account for a third of those answering "yes" or "maybe" to the higher office question. Those statistics may indicate that non-marrieds feel greater freedom, because of fewer family, business or other responsibilities, to enter a major political campaign. But age also appears to be an important factor; seven of the single representatives are in their 20's, five are in their 30's, three are in their 40's, and two are in their 50's.

Education--A crosstabulation shows that level of ambition increases with years of schooling (Table IV). Representatives with a high school education or less are the least ambitious, with only 12.5 percent of them answering "maybe" to running for statewide or congressional office and none giving a "yes" response. Those with some college or trade school indicate more ambition--3.2 percent falling in the "yes" category and 16.1 percent responding "maybe". Among college graduates, 31 percent said they may be interested in seeking higher office, while 20.7 percent answered a definite "yes". "Yes" answers dropped to 8.3 percent for those representatives with advance degrees, but 58.3 percent of them answered "maybe". The decline in "yes" responses among House members holding advance degrees may be due to the likelihood that they are older, or may be more entrenched

TABLE IV

INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER ELECTIVE OFFICE (HEO)
BY EDUCATION

Educational Background	HEO			Totals
	Yes	Maybe	No	
High school or less	0*	2 12.5 6.7	14 87.5 23.0	16
Some college, trade school	1 3.2 11.1	5 16.1 16.7	25 80.6 41.0	31
Bachelor's degree	6 20.7 66.7	9 31.0 30.0	14 48.3 23.0	29
Advance degree	2 8.3 22.2	14 58.3 46.7	8 33.3 13.1	24
Totals	9	30	61	100
*Key: Number Row percent Column percent				

in their professions. When "yes" and "maybe" answers are combined, two-thirds of those with advance degrees indicate an interest in higher office, compared with 51.7 percent of those with bachelor's degrees. These findings support those of Soule, although levels of ambition by educational groupings are not as high as he found among Michigan state representatives: Iowa college graduates--58.5 percent ambitious, Michigan--71 percent; Iowa representatives with some college or trade school--19.4 percent ambitious, Michigan--47 percent; Iowa representatives with no more than a high school education--12.5 percent ambitious, Michigan--33 percent.¹ Soule's study also dealt with seeking higher office, but included a wider range of possible offices than the statewide and congressional seats considered a measure of ambition in this thesis.

It also is worthy of note that while 53 percent of the representatives have at least a bachelor's degree, only 9.1 percent of Iowans 25 and older have that much education, and that while 24 percent of the representatives have five or more years of school, that is true for only 3.6 percent of the general population.² Studies indicate that among state legislatures, however, Iowa's representatives may be

¹Soule, p. 447.

²Iowa Office for Planning and Programming, The Quality of Life in Iowa: 1972, pp. 2-8.

about average in education. One compilation of surveys conducted between 1951 and 1961 showed these percentages of college graduates in various legislatures: California, 58; New Jersey, 63; Ohio, 58; Tennessee, 46; Wisconsin, 45; Minnesota, 54; Indiana, 47; Pennsylvania, 36; and Georgia, 40 percent.¹ One presumes that educational levels among lawmakers in those states have gone up since the studies were done.

Years in the Legislature--No pattern of ambition emerged when this variable was crosstabulated with ambition. However, when "yes" and "maybe" responses are combined, representatives serving their third year appear to be the most ambitious (Table V). That probably is the result of many legislators with three years experience being young, but also having acquired confidence in their political abilities. The table also shows that the ambition level among lawmakers with nine or more years of service is relatively low, apparently reflecting the age factor.

¹Wilder Crane, Jr., and Meredith W. Watts, Jr., State Legislative Systems (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 46-47.

TABLE V
INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER OFFICE BY LEGISLATIVE
EXPERIENCE

Years in Legislature	Number in Iowa House	Number answering yes or maybe	Percentage
One	28	9	32.1
Three	44	21	47.8
Four	1	0	0.0
Five	10	4	40.0
Seven	6	2	33.3
Nine or more	11	3	27.3
Totals	100	39	

Type of District--As noted earlier, data on the effect rural or urban orientation has on political ambition is inconclusive, although some studies have indicated that urban areas may foster ambition. The results of this study support that suggestion, though not with a great degree of statistical significance. Looking first at those representatives who answered "yes" to the question on seeking higher elective office, only one of nine was from a rural district, while three were from mixed districts, and five were from urban districts. Of the 30 answering "maybe," seven were from rural districts, nine were from mixed districts and 14 were urban lawmakers. Percentages, too, increased from

rural to mixed to urban districts among representatives who answered either "yes" or "maybe." These results also appear to be another reflection of the relatively low level of ambition indicated by farmers in the section on occupation.

Political makeup of districts--The crosstabulation shows a fairly even distribution of ambition among representatives from strong Republican, moderate Republican, swing, moderate Democratic and strong Democratic legislative districts. This is consistent with the section on political party, which showed less than a 7 percent spread in the ambition level between Democrats and Republicans.

To this point, analysis has primarily involved an examination of ambition in terms of representatives' backgrounds or biographical-type characteristics. Many of the remaining sections, including the next one, will attempt to reflect differences in attitudes among ambitious and non-ambitious representatives, differences in how they approach their jobs, and what some of the basic tools for building a political base are. Comparable studies could not be found, but would have been helpful in confirming or refuting results or implications of responses to attitudinal questions.

Legislative experience--When crosstabulated with ambition, a relatively even distribution resulted between representatives who have found their legislative experience very rewarding or somewhat rewarding. Of the five who said that

experience has been somewhat disappointing, two answered "yes" to being interested in higher office and three answered "no". Though the sampling is too small to be significant, it suggests that dissolutioned representatives may be more inclined than other House members to get out of politics or seek an office they believe will be more satisfying.

Held leadership post--Of the 35 representatives who have held leadership positions or been committee chairmen, four--or 11.4 percent--said they were interested in higher office and 14--or 40 percent--said they might be. Among the 65 who have not held such positions, five--7.7 percent--answered "yes" and 16--24.6 percent--answered "maybe". Thus a total of 51.4 percent of those in leadership positions indicated they were ambitious, compared with 32.3 percent of those who have not held such posts. The data suggests that those who are ambitious gravitate toward obtaining such positions, which often are considered a potential base of political power. Only standing committee chairmanships qualified representatives among leadership ranks; appropriations subcommittee, special committee and interim committee chairmanships did not.

Seek leadership post--The conclusion suggested in the previous section is supported by responses to whether representatives are interested in seeking a leadership post or committee chairmanship in the future. Of the nine representatives who expressed interest in seeking higher office, eight--

or 88.9 percent--also said they want to be in leadership or be a committee chairman. Of the 30 who responded "maybe" to campaigning for higher office, 26--or 86.7 percent--also are interested in being a legislative leader. But among the 61 who said they are not interested in higher office, only 36--or 59 percent--said they would seek a leadership post of chairmanship in the future. In addition, only six responded "maybe" to seeking such a position, leaving 19--or 31.1 percent--who expressed no interest in chairing a committee or being a floor leader.

Seek an interim committee appointment--Desire to be on an interim committee did not produce such a differentiation between ambitious and non-ambitious lawmakers. Of those responding "yes" to seeking higher office, 77.8 percent also said they would seek appointment to an interim committee, compared with 93.3 percent of those answering "maybe" and 88.5 percent of those who said "no".

Research, committee work, floor debate, constituent contact--Responses to these four elements in the development of legislation will be treated in a single section. One representative declined to rank them in order of importance. The question was conceived with the thought that politically ambitious lawmakers would tend to rank floor debate higher than the non-ambitious, because it tends to provide media exposure. If representatives' answers can be considered candid, there is only slight evidence that floor debate is

acknowledged to be of greater importance by the more ambitious representatives. That is not to say, however, that some House members do not frequently participate in floor debate because of the public exposure that may result.

In any case, results were not conclusive. As noted earlier, 24 respondents attached top priority to individual research, 32 to committee work, and 43 to constituent contact, while none said floor debate was the most important. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that among responding representatives who answered "yes" or "maybe" to the question on higher office, five of 38--or 13.2 percent--ranked floor debate second in importance, compared with only three or 4.9 percent of the 61 non-ambitious lawmakers.

Another way of approaching this data is to assign points for the number of 1, 2, 3 or 4 rankings each variable received; 1 rankings were each assigned four points, 2 rankings three points, 3 rankings two points and 4 rankings one point. Total points were divided by the number of respondents in each category of ambition. The results are in Table VI. As it shows, those who are the most ambitious set a higher priority on individual research and floor debate than did those answering "maybe" or "no" to having an interest in higher office. At the same time, ambitious representatives ranked committee work and contact with constituents lower than did other legislators. Those in the maybe category of ambition gave a low ranking to individual

research, while setting a high priority on committee work. And the non-ambitious placed the highest priority on contact with constituents, while playing down floor debate to a greater extent than did more ambitious representatives.

TABLE VI

AVERAGE RANKINGS GIVEN TO IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH, COMMITTEE WORK, FLOOR DEBATE AND CONSTITUENT CONTACT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEGISLATION, BY THOSE ANSWERING YES, MAYBE OR NO TO HAVING AN INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER ELECTIVE OFFICE

Individual research:	
Those answering yes to higher office.....	2.89
Those answering maybe to higher office.....	2.48
Those answering no to higher office.....	2.66
Committee work:	
Those answering yes to higher office.....	2.78
Those answering maybe to higher office.....	3.03
Those answering no to higher office.....	2.97
Floor debate:	
Those answering yes to higher office.....	1.56
Those answering maybe to higher office.....	1.34
Those answering no to higher office.....	1.19
Contact with constituents:	
Those answering yes to higher office.....	2.78
Those answering maybe to higher office.....	3.14
Those answering no to higher office.....	3.18

Statewide-district orientation--This study supports previously cited literature indicating that ambitious politicians have a statewide, rather than district, orientation (Table VII). The interview question was: If a bill presents

a conflict between voting for the statewide interest or the interest of the people in your district, how would you most likely vote? Three representatives said their votes would depend strictly on the issue, and, thus, they could not answer the question. The crosstabulation showed that of those responding, 77.8 percent of those who answered "yes" to seeking higher office also said they would vote for the statewide interest, while 22.2 percent of the most ambitious House members checked district interest. Among those responding "maybe" to running for a higher office, percentages shifted to 60.7 percent for statewide interest and 39.3 percent for the interest of the legislative district. And of those who said they were not interested in higher office, a greater shift occurred, to 35 percent indicating statewide orientation and 65 percent district orientation. How legislators actually vote is, of course, a different issue. A performance survey in another state asked 181 legislators to rank six criteria for decision making. The pre-session ranking was, in order, conscience, state interest, district interest, party interest, wishes of a particular group, wishes of the governor. Later, legislators said their performance stacked up this way: district interest, conscience, party interest, statewide interest, group wishes and wishes

of the governor.¹ More support, perhaps for the adage that one should watch what a politician does, not what he says, especially when votes back home are involved.

TABLE VII

INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER ELECTIVE OFFICE (HEO)
BY STATEWIDE OR DISTRICT ORIENTATION

Orientation	HEO			Totals
	Yes	Maybe	No	
Statewide	7*	17	21	45
	15.6	37.8	46.7	
	77.8	60.7	35.0	
District	2	11	39	52
	3.8	21.2	75.0	
	22.2	39.3	65.0	
Totals	9	28	60	97

*Key:
Number
Row percent
Column percent

Surveys, newsletters, meetings, speaking invitations--
Answers in these four areas, which also will be handled in a bloc, produced mixed results, the best of which are only indicative. Sixty-eight representatives said they survey

¹Ronald D. Hedlund, "Perceptions of Decisional Referents in Legislative Decisionmaking," American Journal of Political Science, XIX (August, 1975), 527-542.

constituent attitudes on various proposals, and there was little difference between the ambitious and non-ambitious. Seventy-five House members said they write a regular newsletter and the distribution again was quite even. However, when asked if they meet regularly with constituents, two-thirds of those who said they are interested in statewide or congressional office gave positive responses, as did 73.3 percent of those who said "maybe" to seeking higher office. In contrast, 50.8 percent of the non-ambitious representatives said they meet regularly with constituents. All of the most ambitious representatives said they accept speaking invitations outside their legislative district, compared with 96.7 percent of those who answered maybe to higher office, and 78.7 percent of those who said they are not politically ambitious. The implication is that ambitious lawmakers are more inclined to take advantage of opportunities to meet and curry favor with potential constituents.

Remain in Legislature--Hardly any House incumbent, it seems, is willing to say he or she wants to leave the Legislature. More intriguing, though, is that non-ambitious representatives appear to prize their present office more than do those who acknowledge that higher office has appeal. Perhaps that should not be surprising. Soule's study, for example, found that 76 percent of ambitious lawmakers in the Michigan House were willing or probably willing to remain for

three terms, compared with 90 percent of the non-ambitious.¹ In the Iowa House, 89.9 percent of the most ambitious responded "yes" or "maybe" to wanting to remain, as did 96.7 percent of those who answered "maybe" to seeking higher office in the future, and 98.4 percent of those who said they are not interested in higher office. One difference in the studies is that Iowa representatives could give a positive response even though they may want to remain for only one more term. It also is worthy of note that of those who answered "maybe" to running for higher office, only 43.3 percent answered "yes" to remaining in the legislature, while more than 53 percent answered "maybe". More than 70 percent of both the most ambitious and the non-ambitious answered "yes" when asked if they wished to remain in the Legislature. These statistics lend support for the suggestion made in the introduction that ambitious politicians are more prone to chance losing public office if an opportunity for advancement presents itself.

This study also supports findings of two others on the willingness of legislators to seek re-election. One analysis, using data from Wahlke et al., of four state legislatures found that, depending on political party, between 65 and 93 percent of the lawmakers expected to seek re-election.²

¹Soule, p. 442.

²Dwaine Marvick, ed., Political Decision-Makers (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 248.

The other study found that of 96 members of the Connecticut House responding to a questionnaire, 65 percent said they would or probably would be willing to serve three more terms.¹

Party positions--In terms of characteristics of political ambition, the questions on whether representatives had held previous elective or Republican or Democratic Party positions or would seek party positions in the future were not productive. Sixty-four legislators said they had held such positions, and the distribution among ambitious and non-ambitious was relatively even. Again with even distribution, only 24 House members said they would be interested in party posts in the future. During interviews, some who said they did not want a party position expressed the view they already had paid their political "dues." A study of 181 Iowa House and Senate members, who were interviewed in 1967, showed that 53.6 percent of the lawmakers had held formal party leadership positions.² While that percentage is fairly close to these results, it should again be pointed out that the interview question included both party and previous elected positions.

¹James David Barber, The Lawmakers (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 20.

²Patterson and Boynton, p. 250.

Family--As stated in the literature summary, data is inconclusive on the degree to which the family instills political ambition. So are the results of this study, although there is an indication that the family may be a noteworthy factor among the most ambitious representatives. Of the nine representatives who said they are interested in higher office, two said they came from politically active families and four said their families were moderately active. Thus, the family influence may be seen in two-thirds of that small group. However, none of those answering "maybe" to seeking higher office said their families were politically active, and only 30 percent said they came from families that were moderately active. Of the non-ambitious, 19.7 percent reported coming from politically active households and 36.1 percent said they were from moderately active ones, for a total of 55.8 percent. In Patterson and Boynton's study, 39.2 percent of the lawmakers said immediate family members had been active in politics.¹ In this study, when representatives from very and moderately active families were meshed, the percentage is 49. One probably should not expect the figures to be higher. Regarding the extent to which the American family creates political loyalties, Lane has written:

¹Patterson and Boynton, p. 249.

Children are rarely encouraged to enter political careers...And when at various times people are asked specifically about political careers, only a fifth to a quarter approve of this as a career for their sons. Furthermore, the reasons of those who do approve have to do rather more with the need for good and honest men in government than with the advantages of such a career for the boy himself, hardly an endorsement of the field of politics.¹

Political philosophy--The data provides evidence that liberals are more ambitious than conservatives in the Iowa House (Table VIII). Of the nine most ambitious representatives, three described themselves as liberal and six as moderately liberal. Of the 30 who said they might be interested in a higher office, seven--23.3 percent--classified themselves as liberal, 14--46.7 percent--as moderately liberal, and nine--30 percent--as moderately conservative. None of the five House conservatives indicated an ambition for higher office.

The impact liberals have had on the results of this study should be recognized. One way to do that is to compare them with the five conservatives. A fascinating picture emerges: The 11 liberals include only one Republican; the conservatives only one Democrat. The average age of the liberals is 32; of the conservatives, 55. Six of the 11 liberals are single; all the conservatives are married. Liberals average having a bachelor's degree; four

¹Robert E. Lane, Political Life: Why People Get Involved in Politics (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 207-208.

TABLE VIII

INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER ELECTIVE OFFICE (HEO)
BY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy	HEO			Totals
	Yes	Maybe	No	
Liberal	3* 27.3 33.3	7 63.6 23.3	1 9.1 1.7	11
Moderately liberal	6 15.4 66.7	14 35.9 46.7	19 48.7 32.2	39
Moderately conservative	0	9 20.9 30.0	34 79.1 57.6	43
Conservative	0	0	5 100.0 8.5	5
Totals	9	30	59	98

*Key:
Number
Row percent
Column percent

conservatives said they had a high school education or less, one some college or trade school. Only one liberal comes from a rural district, while four conservatives do. Eight of the liberals said they generally vote the statewide interest; the conservatives said they generally vote their legislative district's interest. Three liberals said they are interested in seeking higher elective office and seven said they might be; none of the conservatives are. Seven of the liberals reported annual incomes of less than \$10,000, and one each reported being in the brackets through the \$30-50,000 range. Four conservatives said their incomes were \$15,000 to \$20,000, and one said it was between \$10,000 and \$15,000. In essence, liberals have carried disproportional weight in this attempt to define characteristics of ambition. They make up only 11 percent of the Iowa House, but more than a fourth of ambitious legislators. Their interest in seeking higher office gives Democrats an edge over Republicans when ambition by party is tested. While less than half the representatives choose voting the statewide interest over that of their districts, liberals select statewide by nearly three-to-one. They are young, single, educated and come from urban areas, thus increasing the importance of those factors in the statistics. Conservatives, of course, are a counterforce, but not such a potent one in terms of this study because they comprise a much smaller part of those legislators who are not ambitious.

Remain an elected office holder--Results were similar to those on the question about seeking re-election to the Legislature, with only one representative answering "no". One result, however, was that four of those representatives who said "maybe" to both seeking higher office and remaining in the Legislature, responded with "yes" when asked about remaining an elected office holder. Also, seven non-ambitious representatives who answered "maybe" to remaining in the Legislature changed their answer to "yes" when asked about wanting to remain active as an elected official. In both cases, those representatives may be indicating an interest in running for local office or the Iowa Senate.

Most attractive higher office--Because of the small number of representatives who answered "yes" to seeking a statewide or congressional seat, it is difficult to make a meaningful comparison with those House members who answered maybe. Nevertheless, it is curious that 77.8 percent of those who gave "yes" answers said being governor or holding other statewide office would be most attractive, while those responding "maybe" split evenly between state and congressional offices.

Appeal of higher office--Again, meaningful comparisons between the two ambitious groups are not apparent, although one interesting difference surfaced. All those answering "yes" to higher office gave political ambition or having a greater influence on governmental decisions for a

reason, while 16.7 percent of those answering "maybe" to higher office gave a variety of other reasons. Perhaps "yes" respondents have a somewhat clearer view of why they are in politics. The idea that politics serves personal needs is supported by Lane, who lists six reasons for political involvement: Advance economic or material well-being; satisfy need for friendship and social relations; seek to understand the world and the causes of events; relieve intrapsychic tensions; seek power over others; and defend and improve self-esteem.¹

Income--The statistics show that those in the lowest income bracket--under \$10,000 a year--are the most ambitious (Table IX). At higher income levels, however, results are checkered, perhaps reflecting the presence of politically ambitious professionals, including lawyers. However, the median income of ambitious representatives remains well under that of the non-ambitious. Legislators answering "yes" to being interested in higher office had a median family income--not including their General Assembly salaries of \$8,000 and up--of \$12,500, compared with \$13,500 for those responding "maybe", and \$18,000 for those who said they were not politically ambitious. The median family income for all 100 representatives in 1974 averaged \$16,060, not counting legislative compensation. Comparable figures from government

¹Lane, p. 102.

sources were not available for 1974, but the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recently issued a press release which said that the median family income in Iowa's larger cities--including Des Moines, Davenport and Cedar Rapids--had topped \$14,000.¹ Presumably, family income would average less in smaller cities and rural areas.

TABLE IX
INTEREST IN SEEKING HIGHER OFFICE BY INCOME

Income level	Number in Iowa House	Number answering yes or maybe	Percentage
Less than \$10,000	28	18	64.3
\$10-15,000	28	10	35.7
\$15-20,000	18	3	16.7
\$20-30,000	16	4	25.0
\$30-50,000	7	3	42.9
\$50,000 and over	1	0	0.0
Totals	98	38	

Having provided an opportunity for the reader to become more familiar with the research through a presentation of the findings, a couple of additional comments on the

¹Des Moines Sunday Register, November 2, 1975, p. 12A, col. 1 and 2.

questionnaire are in order.

An independent means of determining the type of legislative district--rural, mixed or urban--and its political makeup--Republican, Democratic or swing--would have been preferable to relying on representatives' assessments. That would have required statistical analyses of the urban and rural populations in each district, as well as traditional voting patterns. Such an analysis presents difficult problems for two reasons. First, legislative districts do not follow county boundaries, while counties are the basic unit from which census information on rural and urban populations is extracted. Extracting that information on a precinct-by-precinct basis for each district would, therefore, have been required. Second, voter registration information by party also follows county, rather than legislative district, boundaries, creating the same problem. In addition, simply checking which party carried each district in recent elections is not adequate because of reapportionment of legislative districts, which became effective in 1972, and the fact that the Democratic Party took control of the General Assembly in 1974 for the first time since the mid-1960s. After conversations with Democratic and Republican Party employees about the complicated and time-consuming solutions to these problems, it was decided to rely on representatives' judgments. It is conceded that some lawmakers may have been inclined to downplay the strength of his or her party in a

district; some Legislators seem reluctant to acknowledge their re-election is a virtual certainty. One advantage of relying on the representatives, however, may have been that they reflected the rural-urban orientation of their districts more accurately than statistics would have. For example, urban growth in a district may have resulted from persons moving off the farm and into nearby municipalities. The orientation of those constituents could be expected to remain mostly rural, even though they had statistically become an urban dweller.

The section in which representatives ranked research, committee work, floor debate and constituent contact was not as instructive as had been hoped. Perhaps greater detail should have been sought in those and other areas, along the lines of Barber's work.¹ The same type of problem was encountered in the section on whether representatives survey constituent attitudes, write newsletters, meet regularly with constituents, and accept speaking invitations outside their legislative districts. Perhaps those were the wrong questions, or perhaps obtaining more detailed information would have produced better results. The writer remains convinced, however, that most career politicians develop disciplined working habits intended to result in everyday, even

¹Barber, The Lawmakers, pp. 271-281.

mundane, decisions being handled in a way which is consistent with the future goal of reaching higher office.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, ambitious state representatives in Iowa are generally well-educated, young and come from urban areas. Thus, the data supports the thesis. In addition, the findings indicate that single persons and liberals are likely to be more ambitious than married persons and conservatives, which may be attributable in large part to age differences of these groups. Farmers do not appear to be particularly ambitious, a finding that more detailed analysis could show to be a by-product of age, political philosophy, rural orientation and perhaps other factors.

But, as one writer put it, political combatants are not "equivalent to the steel ball in a pinball game, bumping passively from post to post down an inclined plane."¹ There is evidence of attitudes among the ambitious which are not present in the non-ambitious, of a different set of priorities being present as seekers of higher office go about their legislative responsibilities. The most important, as revealed by the findings, is that ambitious state representatives are more likely to vote for the statewide interest over that of

¹David Bicknell Truman, The Governmental Process (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951), p. 332.

their own legislative districts. The study also showed ambitious representatives are more likely to already have achieved legislative leadership posts, and have a greater willingness to continue holding such positions. The ambitious legislator appears more ready to walk into the media spotlight of floor debate, and accept speaking invitations which broaden the political base. By a narrow margin, the ambitious also appear not quite so willing to indefinitely remain in the Legislature. One is left with the impression that behind an ambitious representative's behavior is a grand political design, or at least a seed which could quickly be brought to bloom should the opportunity for advancement arise. Which is not to say that, for such persons, the job of legislating need be neglected. Indeed, if election to the Iowa Legislature is viewed as a step toward higher office, political ambition can translate into being a hard working lawmaker.

The findings also produced mixed, or inconclusive, results. The influence of the family on ambition among state representatives remains uncertain. So does the importance, if any, of having held elective or political party positions before being elected to the House. Income data, too, is not conclusive, and raises a question: Do ambitious representatives have lower incomes because they are devoting more time to politics, or because they are younger and not yet well-established in a business?

More sophisticated analysis of the data might provide an answer to that and other questions, which deserve further research if characteristics of ambition are to be defined as sharply as possible. Is there a relationship between age, occupation and perhaps other factors which would help explain why Democrats in this study are slightly more ambitious than Republicans? Is the ambition level of, say, a Democrat elected from a traditionally Republican area higher because his tenure might be short-lived, or lower because he is cautiously trying to hold on to a tenuous position? Was the question on individual research, committee work, floor debate and constituent contact ill-conceived, or would further analysis produce more concrete results or, at least, suggest improvements in the questionnaire which would better probe the behavior of ambitious representatives? What would be the result of analyzing likely voting pattern--statewide vs. district--against such variables as rural-urban orientation, age, occupation? What is the relationship between education and political philosophy? Are Iowa representatives typical of state legislators across the country and, if so, can it be assumed that characteristics which surfaced in this study are likely to be found in lawmakers from New Jersey or Georgia or Oregon? (A national survey of legislators' characteristics, such as average age, occupational breakdown, educational background and marital status, could not be located. Existing data from a handful of states is mostly

15 to 25 years old, and was handled in summary form in the thesis. Because of numerous changes, political and social, which have taken place in the past two decades, that data is considered suspect.)

The questions could go on, but there is one raised by Eulau which deserves special attention, especially since it involves a problem facing the behavioral movement in political science. That is how reflective of the individuals involved are the facts which result from aggregate totals? He points out that when the aggregate result is applied to the individual, the inference may be wrong. It is a problem for which Eulau yet has no answer, but he argues that one needs to be found if behavioral statements are to be made about large political systems. In the meantime, aggregate data should not be abandoned, but treated with reservation, in Eulau's opinion.¹

Indeed, such data should not be abandoned. Ambition, at its heart, is a quest for power. Power to make money, to command respect or attention, to fulfill personal needs, to cause change in a social system that hopefully benefits the general public. Efforts to define the source or depth of political power frequently are futile, or too often are successful only after power has been wielded without the benefit

¹Heinz Eulau, Micro-Macro Political Analysis (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 162-163.

of a public discussion. To use a description by Eulau and Prewitt:

...Power is elusive, and it is elusive precisely because it is so pervasive, so pernicious--and so invisible. Once we begin to inquire into the phenomenon of power, the reality to which it presumably refers recedes ever more into the background. The search for power seems to involve infinite regression. There always seems to be power behind power. There appears to be no end of the line.¹

The task, then, becomes one of understanding those who hold or seek power--the ambitious. That requires knowing not only who they are, but from where they came, where they want to go, and how they plan to get there. Studies such as this thesis, even if refined, will never be satisfactory. A theory of ambition, should it evolve, could not be static, because the characters and their means of operation would be forever changing. The theory would always be trailing reality. At best, then, ambition theory may eventually be able to aid the electorate in its recruitment of politicians (at least in those cases when the public is the recruiter). Ambition cannot and should not be stifled, but understanding ambition better would help us assess the public character of our politicians. Barber has written:

¹Heinz Eulau and Kenneth Prewitt, Labyrinths of Democracy: Adaptations, Linkages, Representation and Policies in Urban Politics (Indianapolis-New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1973), p. 5.

Perhaps the survival of American democracy does not depend on recruiting the very best talents to government. But excellence in American government--the rationality of its decisions, the quality of justice it dispenses, the timeliness of its actions--these things depend profoundly on the character of those we elect.¹

¹James David Barber, The Lawmakers (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), p.1.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW FORM

1. What is your age as of May 1, 1975?
2. What is your occupation?
3. Are you married?
4. Is your educational background:
 High school or less? Some college or trade school?
 Bachelor's degree? Advance degree?
5. How many years have you served in the Legislature?
6. Do you represent a rural, urban or mixed legislative district?
7. Is your legislative district:
 Strong Republican? Moderate Republican? Swing?
 Moderate Democrat? Strong Democrat?
8. Has your legislative experience been:
 Very rewarding? Somewhat rewarding?
 Somewhat disappointing? Very disappointing?
9. Have you been a legislative leader or committee chairman?
10. Would you seek a leadership post or committee chairmanship in the future?
11. Have you or would you seek appointment to an interim committee?
12. In what order of importance do you place:
 Individual research ____ Committee work ____
 Floor debate ____ Contact with constituents ____

13. If a bill presents a conflict between voting for the statewide interest or the interest of the people in your district, how would you most likely vote?
14. Do you survey constituent attitudes on various proposals?
15. Do you write a regular newsletter?
16. Do you hold regular, organized meetings with constituents?
17. Do you accept speaking invitations outside your legislative district?
18. Do you want to remain in the Legislature?

Yes	No	Maybe
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19. Did you seek elective or political party positions before running for the Legislature?
20. Are you interested in seeking party positions in the future?
21. Politically, was your family very active, moderately active, or inactive?
22. Is your political philosophy:

Liberal	Moderately liberal
Moderately conservative	Conservative
23. Do you want to remain active as an elected office holder?
24. Are you interested in seeking higher elective office?

Yes	No	Maybe
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25. If yes or maybe, what higher elective office is most attractive:

Governor?	Statewide other than governor?
U.S. Senate?	U.S. House of Representatives?
26. Why are you (or why are you not) interested in seeking higher elective office?

27. Is your annual income (including salary of spouse, but not your legislative salary):

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 to \$15,000
<input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 to \$20,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to \$30,000
<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 to \$50,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 and over